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**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

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# Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

## Report of the Secretary-General

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# I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, by which the Secretary-General was required to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is also in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on humanitarian assistance, and further pursuant to Assembly resolution 52/168 of 16 December 1997, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Assembly through the Council on the further progress of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations in humanitarian assistance. The present report[1] also documents the implementation of the agreed conclusions 1998/1 adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its 1998 humanitarian affairs segment.[2] It does so in the context of the ongoing programme of reform of the United Nations endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/12 of 12 November 1997, in particular those measures aimed at strengthening the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

# II. Context: challenges of the past year

2. The past year has been one of enormous challenges. A particularly striking phenomenon has been the extraordinary rise in the number and scale of natural disasters, and of their human and financial cost. The suffering and devastation caused by natural disasters has risen steadily, culminating in 1998 when natural calamities claimed the lives of more than 50,000 people worldwide. Forest fires raged in Indonesia, Brazil and the Russian far east; El Niño caused historic levels of flooding in Latin America; unprecedented floods devastated large parts of Bangladesh and China, and hurricanes Georges and Mitch caused massive destruction in the Caribbean region and Central America. Floods struck Somalia and the Sudan, a cyclone killed 10,000 in Gujarat (India) and a tsunami hit Papua New Guinea. Estimated economic losses exceeded US$ 90 billion, compared with US$ 30 billion in 1997. Indications are that this increase is linked to factors such as rapid population growth and urbanization, environmental degradation, global climatic changes and other causes. In many cases, man-made elements exacerbated the impact of disasters, highlighting the need for intensive disaster-reduction/prevention activities as part of overall relief and development strategies.

3. Natural disasters affecting populations already suffering from complex emergencies presented the international community with particularly formidable challenges. In the space of one year (1998 and early 1999), Afghanistan was hit by three major earthquakes. International relief efforts were hampered by the ongoing conflict, the remoteness of the affected areas and harsh weather conditions. A costly air operation was required to deliver the assistance provided by the international community. Similarly challenging situations were created by drought in southern Sudan and floods in Somalia, both in the context of ongoing civil wars that posed major access and security challenges.

4. Regarding complex emergencies, ongoing conflicts in Angola and Sierra Leone intensified, while those in Afghanistan and the Sudan continued. In a number of regions, internal wars took on a larger regional dimension as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in West Africa. In 1999, new violence broke out with enormous loss of life and human suffering in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and in the south Balkans. Direct attacks on civilian populations, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law, led to massive forced displacement and loss of life in several countries. In Angola and Sierra Leone, civilian populations were deliberately targeted and terrorized. Those events led to major increases in the number of internally displaced persons and refugees in several countries. Although numbers of internally displaced persons are often hard to quantify, it was estimated that in Angola alone, at least 500,000 people had been newly displaced between 1 January and 15 May 1999. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea was believed to have led to the internal displacement of some 750,000 people.

5. A United Nations Inter-Agency Needs Assessment Mission, led by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, was dispatched to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 16 to 27 May, to provide an initial assessment of the emergency needs of civilian populations and of the medium-term rehabilitation requirements in the country, in the light of the approaching winter.[3] The Mission determined that humanitarian needs of the internally displaced and other civilians remaining in the province of Kosovo were urgent and immense, and that food and the provision of primary health care were the major priorities. The Mission reported on the mass forced displacement and deportation of thousands of civilians, wholesale destruction of property and means of livelihood, wanton lawlessness and violence, thousands of documented

killings, countless as yet undocumented deaths, and immeasurable human suffering. Over 850,000 Kosovar Albanians had fled the province, and many provided consistent accounts of civilians being subjected to systematic and extreme human rights violations. Many Kosovars had been stripped of their identity and other documents as they left. Meanwhile, the Mission noted a great deal of physical destruction and damage caused by the air strikes carried out by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in all the areas of Serbia visited by the Mission. The Yugoslav Red Cross gave figures that 700 civilians had died and 6,400 civilians were injured, with many having lost their homes in the attacks. The overall state of the economy, the closure of industries due to direct war damage or indirect consequences, such as the lack of raw materials, loss of trade and damage to transportation links, had led to the growing impoverishment of the Serbian population. Damage to essential services had also caused tremendous hardship for the civilian population.

6. In several complex emergency situations, humanitarian agencies were denied access to the affected areas for long periods of time, further exacerbating the suffering of the victims. In some cases, access was blocked not only by conditions of insecurity, but also by deliberate policies of Governments and parties to conflicts, often in direct violation of obligations under international law. In particular, hundreds of thousands of children were deprived of their basic rights to life, food, health care and education as a result of conflict. This threatens not only their immediate well-being, but also their long-term prospects for development. An estimated 300,000 child soldiers were active in conflicts around the world. This practice was especially prevalent in Sierra Leone and Uganda.

7. The dramatic social changes resulting from conflicts in many parts of the world have profound effects on social relations, especially for women and girls. The majority of internally displaced persons and refugees around the world continue to be women and children. In several conflicts, women continued to suffer disproportionately from violence and abuse, including many cases of rape in Kosovo. In other situations, such as Afghanistan, they were the victims of discrimination in the allocation of goods and access to services. However, the role of women in post-conflict peace-building initiatives at community level was increasingly recognized.

8. Attacks on humanitarian personnel, already highlighted in last year's report, continued at a totally unacceptable level. In 1998, 22 United Nations staff members involved in complex emergencies lost their lives. The loss of humanitarian personnel in several direct attacks in Angola and Somalia illustrated the extent of this growing problem.

9. The pandemic of HIV/AIDS, especially on the African continent, is increasingly recognized as having major humanitarian implications. The increased risk of transmission of HIV/AIDS during emergencies is considerable and will affect the post-conflict and reconstruction phases long after the crisis is over. Humanitarian organizations should therefore regard measures to reduce transmission as a top priority even if HIV/AIDS is not an immediate visible cause of mortality during the crisis.

10. The challenges of adjustment to global markets resulted in financial crises in a number of regions of the world, leading to rising levels of dire poverty and political instability, in some cases triggering a need for humanitarian assistance. These complex situations require an integrated response from development and humanitarian actors.

11. Finally, difficulties in responding to these numerous challenges were exacerbated by uneven levels of funding to consolidated appeals. While the overall response to the consolidated appeals for 1999 was approximately 30 per cent by 31 May 1999, as compared to about 15 per cent in 1998, the response was extremely uneven in geographical and sectoral distribution (see table 1). Uneven sectoral funding means that contributions do not ensure a necessary minimum of care. For example, food contributions in kind cannot be made use of in the absence of cash contributions to finance transportation and distribution systems. Uneven geographical funding leaves some countries in a situation of critical underfunding, such as in Guinea-Bissau where only 5.5 per cent of assessed needs were met, while other emergencies attract extremely high levels of funding, as in the region of the former Yugoslavia. This unbalanced funding threatens to undermine the basic principle of humanitarian action, that aid is provided irrespective of political and other considerations.

Table 1
**1999 United Nations consolidated inter-agency humanitarian assistance appeals: Summary of requirements and contributions by affected country/region as at 31 May 1999**

*Compiled by OCHA on the basis of information provided by the respective appealing organizations*

| *Affected country/ region* | *Requirements (US$)* | *Funding (US$)* | *Carryover funds (US$)* | *Total funds available (US$)* | *Shortfall (US$)* | *% of needs covered (%)* | *Target beneficiaries* | *Implementation period* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Africa** | | | | | | | | |
| Angola[b] | 62 858 852 | 37 330 005 | 0 | 37 330 005[a] | 35 639 392 | 43.3 | 1 400 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Burundi[c] | 38 111 327 | 5 159 806 | 0 | 5 159 806 | 32 951 521 | 13.5 | 860 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo[c] | 17 383 831 | 2 030 862 | 0 | 2 030 862 | 15 352 969 | 11.7 | 394 600 | Jan 99–Jun 99 |
| Uganda[c] | 8 115 868 | 959 879 | 0 | 959 879 | 7 155 989 | 11.8 | 585 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| United Republic of Tanzania[c] | 9 504 800 | 424 399 | 0 | 424 399 | 9 080 401 | 4.5 | 322 002 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Great Lakes region and Central Africa[c] | 240 675 497 | 83 328 452 | 0 | 83 328 452 | 157 347 045 | 34.6 | – | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Guinea-Bissau | 28 655 368 | 1 578 108 | 0 | 1 578 108 | 27 077 260 | 5.5 | 385 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Sierra Leone[b] | 27 924 296 | 6 937 128 | 0 | 6 937 128 | 22 577 914 | 19.1 | 760 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Somalia | 65 661 916 | 12 866 919 | 0 | 12 866 919 | 52 794 997 | 19.6 | 4 000 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Sudan | 198 430 939 | 43 125 363 | 0 | 43 125 363 | 155 305 576 | 21.7 | 2 367 200 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| **Total** | **697 322 694** | **193 740 921** | **0** | **193 740 921** | **515 283 064** | **26.1** | **11 073 802** | – |
| **Newly independent States and the Middle East** | | | | | | | | |
| Tajikistan | 24 799 910 | 990 465 | 0 | 990 465 | 23 809 445 | 4.0 | 1 300 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| **Total** | **24 799 910** | **990 465** | **0** | **990 465** | **23 809 445** | **4.0** | **1 300 000** | – |
| **Asia, Europe and Latin America** | | | | | | | | |
| Afghanistan | | 112 963 742 | 0 | 11 631 427 | 101 332 315 | 10.3 | Countrywide | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Democratic People's Republic of Korea | | 292 077 588 | 0 | 43 735 496 | 248 342 092 | 15.0 | 8 044 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| Former Yugoslavia[d] | | | | 316 050 635 | 310 618 580 | 50.5 | 2 950 000 | Jan 99–Dec 99 |
| **Total** | **1 031 038 072** | **340 635 500** | **30 782 058** | **371 417 558** | **660 292 987** | **36.0** | **10 994 000** | – |
| **Grand total** | **1 753 160 676** | **535 366 886** | **30 782 058** | **566 148 944** | **1 199 385 496** | **31.6** | **23 367 802** | – |
| Kosovo crisis — Donor Alert and Addenda 1 and 2 (d) | **266 601 656** | – | – | **0** | **266 601 656** | **0.0** | **950 000** | Apr 99–Jun 99 |

[a] Includes 1998 pledges of US$ 10.6 million to WFP which have been made available in 1999. WFP indicates that this surplus will be carried forward to the next phase of the operation.

[b] As one surplus in one project does not offset the shortfall of another, the shortfall reflects the actual remaining needs. Please refer to table 2 for details.

[c] Please note that the total requirements for and contributions to UNHCR and WFP for country-specific appeal in the Great Lakes region are reflected in the regional appeal.

[d] To rationalize the tracking of contributions for the overall inter-agency humanitarian programme for the region including the countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania, the urgent requirements and the funds received for the Kosovo Crisis — Donor Alert and Addenda 1 and 2 have been reflected in the tracking of the 1999 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal issued in December 1998. This appeal will be revised in the near future.

# III. Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance

## A. Coordination in complex emergencies

12. The challenges confronted in the past year have placed limits on the ability of humanitarian agencies to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have responded by trying to improve the environment for humanitarian action and by further work to strengthen coordination mechanisms.

### 1. Improving the environment for humanitarian action

13. There are a number of ways in which humanitarian agencies have sought to improve the environment for humanitarian action. These include: negotiation with parties to conflicts over issues of access and security; reinforcement of the principles of humanitarian action; strengthening of the legal framework; and advocacy with the Security Council and other bodies.

14. Effective negotiation, based on humanitarian principles, is intended to ensure that all parties to conflicts understand and implement their responsibility for the basic welfare of the civilian population in the areas they control. Such negotiations are carried out by humanitarian coordinators, or when required by senior humanitarian officials dispatched from Headquarters. When appropriate, political representatives of the Secretary-General may assist the humanitarian coordinator with the negotiations, but it is essential that the distinction between humanitarian negotiations for access and security, and negotiations on a political settlement of the conflict, is strictly maintained.

15. Negotiations can be facilitated if there is an acceptance among all parties — government, non-State actors and humanitarian organizations — of a set of principles of engagement which apply to the humanitarian operation. In some countries agreements about these principles have taken the form of a code of conduct drawn up by humanitarian organizations to describe their method of operation, which may then be formally endorsed by the Government and other parties to the conflict. The aim is to obtain unimpeded access to those in need on the basis of a recognition of the neutrality, impartiality and independence of the humanitarian operation. A recent example of this approach is the development of "principles of engagement" for humanitarian operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the United Nations, the European Community Humanitarian Office and a number of non-governmental organizations, which was accepted by both the Government in Kinshasa and the opposition, as a precondition for humanitarian aid. This approach built on earlier experiences in Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Sudan. Those efforts reveal the need for continual dialogue to promote application of the "principles of engagement".

16. Effective negotiations with parties to conflict can result in a number of opportunities to reach affected populations, including the creation of secure humanitarian corridors and authorization of relief flights. Negotiations with all parties to a conflict for a temporary humanitarian ceasefire to permit the immunization of children have also proved effective in promoting health care objectives.

17. The environment for humanitarian action can also be improved through increased respect for, adherence to and application of international laws and norms relating to the rights of civilians. The guiding principles on internal displacement, presented to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998 (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2), have quickly begun to gain authority as an international standard. The Representative of the Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons and the United Nations agencies have been actively disseminating the principles. They have also organized together with international organizations and non-governmental organizations, regional meetings to discuss their application in the field. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) welcomed the principles and has begun applying them in field missions. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has disseminated the principles among its member States. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) is scheduled to discuss the guiding principles at a meeting of its Commission on Refugees. However, in spite of these positive developments, some Governments remain reluctant to apply internationally recognized norms with regard to the internally displaced.

18. Strengthening the protection of civilians in conflict must be supported by effective advocacy and a solid legal framework. In this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the focus has been on three parallel approaches: promoting respect for existing international humanitarian law; promoting the establishment of the International Criminal Court; and engaging the Security Council in efforts to identify innovative ways in which the Council, acting within its mandate, can strengthen its capacity to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict.

19. A functioning system of international justice capable of prosecuting individuals suspected of genocide, crimes

against humanity and war crimes can help to improve the environment for humanitarian action, both by deterring those considering incitement to genocide or ethnic cleansing, and by providing redress for the victims. On 31 May 1999, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed a statement emphasizing the importance of an effective and independent International Criminal Court and urging member States to ratify the statute.

20. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is running a major international campaign under the slogan "Even wars have limits". This reflects the importance of constant dissemination work in all parts of the world to promote knowledge of the principles of international humanitarian law. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and ICRC, has initiated a substantial capacity-building effort for staff and partners in the area of humanitarian law and principles.

21. In January 1999, the President of the Security Council invited the Emergency Relief Coordinator to brief the Council on promoting peace and security: humanitarian activities relevant to the Security Council. In February, the President invited UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and ICRC to speak on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. These events followed a presentation to the Security Council by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in November 1998 focusing on security problems impeding the work of UNHCR and other agencies. The ensuing presidential statement of 12 February 1999 requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with IASC, to present a report on the protection of civilians to the Security Council in September 1999.

### 2. Enhancing humanitarian response through effective coordination

22. Work on strengthening the systems for field coordination has been a major priority for IASC during 1998, as stipulated in the Council's Agreed Conclusions of 1998. This work includes effective preparedness and multisectoral planning for emergencies; efforts to promote follow-up through strategic monitoring and evaluation; and specific efforts to improve the coordination of responses to internally displaced person situations.

23. **Early warning and preparedness**. The primary purpose of humanitarian early warning is to ensure quick and effective humanitarian response to new emergencies. There has been increased focus on pre-emergency contingency planning and other preparedness measures by the United Nations agencies in recent years, especially in response to the lessons learned from the 1994 Rwanda emergency. However, those efforts remain too ad hoc and unsystematic in nature and, in some cases, have been seen as little more than the creation of a planning document. Several steps are needed to address this problem. The United Nations humanitarian agencies need to ensure that such planning and preparedness measures are a regular feature of their pre-emergency functions, and that they are undertaken as a continuous process that responds dynamically to changing circumstances. Donor Governments need to advocate more forcefully for such actions to be undertaken, and to provide the significant resources that such preparedness measures can entail. The Governments in countries where such efforts are undertaken need to recognize more fully their non-political, humanitarian nature and to support appropriate actions of this type.

24. **Strategic planning, including strengthening of the consolidated appeal process**. A number of initiatives intended to develop strategic approaches to the planning of humanitarian interventions are described in section IV. Significant progress has been made in strengthening the consolidated appeal process, particularly by enhancing the capacity of country teams to manage and implement the process, through training and workshops. At the request of donor Governments, the consolidated appeals for 1999 were launched simultaneously in December 1998, the first ever joint launch.

25. Less progress has been made on efforts to translate the consolidated appeal processes and their related common humanitarian action plans into more effective prioritization of programmes. Part of the difficulty has been with the disjuncture between the timing of the preparation of the process and agency planning cycles. This is being addressed during 1999 by an early start to the appeal process planning cycle. In the context of serious constraints on financial resources, real prioritization of programmes within agreed common objectives will be a major focus for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in 1999.

26. A corollary of effective strategic planning is the development of systems for strategic monitoring, that is for monitoring the effectiveness of coordination, the implementation of common objectives, and the impact of gaps in programmes, including through shortfalls in funding. A proposal for a strategic monitoring unit in Afghanistan is now under consideration. A key objective of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee during 1999 and beyond is to build on improvements in the consolidated appeal process,

including through the development of effective monitoring systems.

27. **Strengthening of the field presence**. Central to the process of strengthening field coordination is work done to strengthen the capacity of humanitarian coordinators. In many cases, resident coordinators are asked to assume humanitarian coordinator functions. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has worked closely with the UNDP Administrator to ensure that there is early consultation on the selection of resident coordinators for countries where the two functions are already combined, as well as for countries where there exists a serious risk of a humanitarian emergency. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has also encouraged all operational agencies to nominate candidates with prior humanitarian experience to participate in the competency assessment exercise for resident coordinators, and thereby to enrich the roster of candidates. In addition, United Nations Volunteers continue to support humanitarian agencies and humanitarian coordination structures in several countries.

28. A joint consultation with resident and humanitarian coordinators held in Geneva in December 1998 provided an opportunity for sharing lessons learned and experiences, especially regarding the need for strategic planning of assistance interventions. Such consultations will be repeated regularly, in collaboration with IASC members, in order to strengthen the links between headquarters and field coordination personnel.

29. **Assistance and protection for internally displaced persons**. Effective coordination is of particular importance in designing the inter-agency response to the needs of internally displaced persons. Since there is no single international lead agency responsible for helping Governments to provide assistance and protection to internally displaced persons, the Secretary-General, as part of his reform programme, has called for the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure that gaps in assistance and protection are addressed. A number of initiatives have been launched to facilitate this task and to assist agency personnel in the field to design effective programmes for internally displaced persons.

30. As a first step, a review of the division of responsibilities in all internally displaced person situations is being undertaken. An IASC policy paper on protection of internally displaced persons, based on joint work by the Representative of the Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is being finalized, setting out the competencies and mandates of the different agencies, identifying a number of ways to ensure that protection responsibilities are discharged effectively and putting in place a system which routinely and rapidly assigns responsibilities in particular situations. This will be done by structured interaction between resident coordinators and their country teams with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and IASC, using a checklist approach, to enable the resident coordinator to make a clear recommendation to IASC. To facilitate these efforts, a senior adviser to the Emergency Relief Coordinator has been appointed and IASC members have been requested to appoint senior focal points for internally displaced persons within their organizations. A compendium of good field practice has also been prepared for distribution to humanitarian workers and increased efforts are under way in the field of information, including the development of a global internally displaced persons database, placing country profiles on the Internet, data collection from over 50 countries and the establishment of procedures for systematic data collection at the field level. An inter-agency training module on internal displacement for field personnel will be developed in 1999.

## B. Coordination in natural disasters

31. While the Governments of countries affected by natural disasters bear the ultimate responsibility for bringing relief to the distressed population, the response of the humanitarian system of the international community to such disasters has been gaining in dimension and importance. According to statistics of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, contributions made by the international community for relief assistance to the survivors of natural disasters amounted to over US$ 1 billion in 1998 — representing an increase of over 300 per cent from 1997. In 1998, the largest emergency relief operation ever undertaken by the World Food Programme (WFP), that of assisting over 19 million people, was implemented following the Bangladesh floods. The devastating impact of the 1998 disasters has also provided sufficient evidence that natural disasters should be considered on a par with complex emergencies in terms of their impact on people, environment and their long-lasting economic consequences.

32. Efforts to coordinate the response of the United Nations system to natural disasters have included the launching of three major United Nations inter-agency appeals in the context of natural disasters (hurricane Mitch and the Bangladesh and China floods). A total of 17 United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams were

fielded during the year, situation reports on over 60 natural disasters were disseminated, 28 international appeals were launched, and over US$ 1 billion in response aid was recorded. The fact that reports were regularly posted on the Web site Reliefweb, together with details on financial tracking, added considerably to the overall information management on natural disasters. Efforts have also been undertaken with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to strengthen the responsiveness of in-country coordination systems. To this end, a joint letter from the UNDP Administrator and the Emergency Relief Coordinator was sent to resident coordinators, underlining their responsibility for humanitarian coordination in matters relating to natural disasters.

33. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs allocates priority status to response preparedness in its work programme. Relevant activities include international disaster management workshops, such as the workshop organized jointly with UNDP and held in Beijing in June 1999, regional workshops and seminars addressing improved use and coordination of military and civil defence assets, the development of contingency plans, and the strengthening of United Nations disaster assessment and coordination team membership in disaster-prone regions. A new initiative is the establishment of regional disaster response coordination units in Asia, Latin America and the South Pacific to assist in awareness-raising, advocacy and coordination of natural disaster preparedness and response activities. In addition, following the recommendations of an evaluation study on the response of the United Nations system to the Afghanistan earthquakes, humanitarian agencies held a disaster response workshop in Dushanbe.

34. International disaster response mechanisms have proven their worth in the wake of many of the natural disasters that have occurred during the past 12 months. However, evaluations drew attention to aspects of the international response system which need strengthening. Areas requiring improvement are response preparedness and capacity-building, access to resources for emergency relief, and more effective bridging of the gap between emergency relief and early recovery (see sect. IV). A recently established inter-agency reference group on natural disasters is working on a set of recommendations on the strengthening of the mechanisms of response to natural disasters of Inter-Agency Standing Committee members, at both headquarters and field levels; the recommendations will be presented to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group. What emerges from these and other similar initiatives is the recognition that strengthening the coordination of international response to natural disasters and environmental emergencies requires a continuing dialogue between major actors in all disasters, starting with the Governments of disaster-prone countries themselves. Harnessing national and international resources in order to deliver timely and effective assistance to the victims requires a response-preparedness approach where United Nations resident coordinators, under the authority of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, play a pivotal role in supporting national Governments.

35. In order to improve the collaborative links between the donor community and disaster-prone countries, the International Emergency Response Consultative Mechanism has been established. Policy makers, emergency managers, practitioners in the field and providers of military and civil defence assets come together in this forum to discuss, among other issues, the timely mobilization of national assets in case of disasters. The Mechanism also promotes the development of best practices for response and coordination. A similar initiative is the European Coordination Programme, which comprises the 44 Partnership for Peace nations, regional intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations system and the Red Cross movement, and looks at key policy issues in the context of coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

36. Years after the Chernobyl disaster, the long-term consequences continue to call for assistance by the international community. Problems requiring special attention include: health effects, where there is a confirmed increase in the incidence of thyroid cancer, in particular, in those who were children at the time of the accident; environmental problems, such as the reuse of contaminated forests, contaminated food and water pollution; psychological impact on the population; and social and economic rehabilitation of the affected areas. The approach taken in the United Nations appeal for international cooperation on Chernobyl, which the Council may wish to endorse, is to strengthen the national institutions in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine by developing local skills to address the long-term consequences of the disaster. With regard to the nuclear disaster in Semipalatinsk, the Government of Japan, in cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP, will host an international conference in September 1999 with particular focus on medical aspects.

37. The General Assembly, in its resolution 38/202 of 20 December 1983 on strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters and other disaster situations, authorized the Secretary-General to permit the former Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator to respond to requests for emergency

disaster assistance up to a total of $600,000 in any one year, with a normal ceiling of $50,000 per country in the case of any one disaster, within existing resources as far as possible. In 1998, there were 22 natural disasters, for which grants between $10,000 and $50,000 were made, totalling $580,000. In January 1999 alone, grants of $110,000 were made for four natural disasters. In view of the experience gained over the years and the repeated occurrence of natural disasters requiring timely emergency response, the Secretary-General has proposed, in the context of his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (A/54/6 (Sect. 25)), a $300,000 increase, from $1,200,000 to $1,500,000, for the biennium. The proposed increase of $300,000, the only one over the course of 15 years, would provide a firm basis for meeting some of the most pressing needs of populations affected by disasters and would enable the Secretariat to respond to at least 30 disaster situations per biennium. The Council may wish to express its support for the proposal.

38. Notwithstanding these efforts, the immediate availability of cash resources for life-saving and life-sustaining assistance to survivors continues to be a major concern. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has established a reserve fund for immediate cash disbursement under the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Relief Assistance, currently supported by four donors. The donor community is urged to come forward with additional voluntary contributions to this reserve, as recommended in the 1998 humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council.[2]

## C. Policy coordination through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs

39. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee continues to be the principal inter-agency policy coordination, consultation and decision-making forum for addressing humanitarian issues and concerns. The admission of the World Bank into the membership of the Committee in March 1999 further strengthens this forum.

40. In October 1998, the Standing Committee issued its comprehensive recommendations related to the Review of the Capacity of the United Nations System for Humanitarian Assistance.[4] These recommendations are already being used to guide the selection of appropriate coordination arrangements at the field level. Through its Working Group, the Committee has broadened the consultative process on policy issues by delegating to individual members lead responsibility for the work on specific issues in sub-working or reference groups. It now has sub-working and reference groups focusing on natural disasters, improving the consolidated appeal process, human rights/humanitarian action, internally displaced persons, gender and humanitarian response, training, small arms, assistance to countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, post-conflict reintegration and millennium initiatives. At each of the meetings of the Working Group, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee now routinely reviews a specific country operation. The analysis of a country situation in the presence of the resident/humanitarian coordinator helps to build a common understanding between agency headquarters and country teams.

41. Humanitarian organizations need to understand clearly the complex environment in which they work. This challenge is reflected in the diversity of the policy issues faced by the Committee. Three issues warrant particular attention in 1999, namely, those related to human rights, gender and issues affecting children.

42. **Human rights**. Recognizing that systematic abuses of human rights are often the cause of humanitarian crises, the Standing Committee has initiated work to define more clearly the interrelationships between human rights and humanitarian action. This work has two parts: enhancing the awareness among humanitarian workers of the human rights environment in which they work and of the ways in which their work can help to secure basic rights; and increasing the understanding within the human rights community of the positive contribution which humanitarian action can play in the promotion and protection of human rights.

43. **Gender**. Following the discussion on gender at the 1998 humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council, an Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Response was established to recommend policy on how to ensure that humanitarian operations routinely address issues related to gender. Its work has resulted in the adoption of a policy statement by the Standing Committee, which the Council may wish to endorse. The lack of existing tools for gender analysis and impact assessment in emergencies was recognized as an important constraint to the implementation of that policy. The Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Response has therefore initiated the development of guidelines for integrating gender analysis into emergency programming. As a first step, an inter-agency "Gender Needs Assessment and Impact Assessment Methodology" is in the process of being developed.

44. **Children**. Despite the attention given in recent years to children in situations of armed conflict, manifested in the Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306) and the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, there is still a lack of inter-agency consultation and coordination in this regard, both at the country and headquarters levels, needs to be strengthened. Violations of children's rights, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, require consistent monitoring and a well-coordinated response. A main objective of humanitarian assistance must be to create conditions which prevent children and youth from falling below a minimum standard for all aspects of their development. A challenge on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to strengthen existing inter-agency mechanisms and partnerships within the international community in terms of action on behalf of children affected by armed conflict. Efforts to end the practice of recruiting and using children as soldiers have continued. This issue requires a three-pronged approach: raising the legal age limit for recruitment; mobilizing an international political campaign of pressure on the warring parties on the ground; and addressing in a comprehensive manner the underlying socio-economic and political factors facilitating recruitment.

45. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs continues to provide, at the level of the principals, an opportunity to enhance interaction and complementarity on issues that have strong security, peacekeeping and political implications for humanitarian assistance. Recent country issues on the Executive Committee's agenda include the determination of appropriate United Nations arrangements in Angola after the departure of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola and relations with regional peacekeeping forces in West Africa.

## D. Administrative matters

46. The budget of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the biennium 1998–1999 covering core activities and projects, field coordination units, and other requirements, is projected at US$ 161.2 million, of which $17.6 million are allocated from the regular budget and $143.6 million from extrabudgetary resources. In the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001, the Secretary-General gave priority to the Office and recommended a growth of 9.6 per cent, with a view to improving the balance between its regular budget and extrabudgetary resources. Thus, in the coming biennium, the regular budget share of the Office's overall resources would increase to 12.5 per cent, while its extrabudgetary resources will constitute 87.5 per cent, as compared to 10.9 per cent and 89.1 per cent, respectively, in the biennium 1998–1999.

47. Donor support will still be critical for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, particularly in addressing the requirements of field coordination units which have been consistently underfunded; efforts should continue to secure a viable and sustainable financial base for the Office, which is working closely with interested Member States to find ways of providing its staff at Headquarters and in the field with contracts of at least one year's duration, including the possibility of establishing a general reserve fund.

48. The General Assembly, in its resolution 46/182, decided that special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the United Nations to enable all organizations to disburse quickly emergency funds and to procure emergency supplies and equipment as well as to recruit emergency staff. The need for these special administrative procedures was reaffirmed by the Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council in its humanitarian affairs segment, held in July 1988.

49. In order to facilitate rapid responses to emergencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has been delegated authority by the Controller to accept contributions, subject to the use of a standard funding agreement and to authorize expenditures in respect of trust funds of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs used for the funding of emergencies.

50. Discussions continue with the Office for Human Resources Management to grant the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs a delegation of authority to recruit emergency field staff under the 200 and 300 series of the Staff Rules and Regulations of the United Nations, to ensure rapid recruitment and deployment of field staff in emergency situations.

51. As regards procurement, agreement has been reached for the Emergency Relief Coordinator to utilize UNDP field capacity for local procurement to meet rapid response requirements. For items and services which cannot be procured or secured by UNDP locally, or where use of existing agency expertise, capacity and resources are not an option, the Emergency Relief Coordinator will work towards expediting emergency procurement from the Central Administrative Services of the United Nations Office at Geneva, under an agreed mechanism providing for prompt backstopping of procurement activities during emergencies.

### Central Emergency Revolving Fund

52. In recent years, requests for utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund have declined. In 1998, only five advances were requested, amounting to US$ 6.3 million; in the first five months of 1999, five advances were granted, representing US$ 2.5 million. Certain factors have contributed to the decline in the use of the Fund. Individual organizations have increased their own internal emergency reserves and have resorted to its use only when the needs exceed their own emergency funds. Some agencies are reluctant to borrow from the Fund for fear of not being able to repay the balance. As provided for in resolution 46/182, utilization of the Fund has been limited to the initial phase of an emergency. Despite the crisis in the Balkans, only one agency has requested an advance from the Fund to address that situation.

53. At the same time, there is a growing demand to address a number of critical humanitarian requirements which have consistently been underfunded, as well as to support new field coordination structures and field security arrangements. There has also been an increase in requests for assistance to support protracted emergencies. The magnitude and duration of natural disasters in 1998 and their devastating impact, particularly on developing countries, have underscored the necessity of an appropriate funding mechanism to ensure a rapid response to the most pressing needs of disaster-affected populations. While the Fund was designed as a cash-flow mechanism to ensure a rapid response to requests for assistance in complex emergencies, there is no explicit provision in its operational guidelines on its utilization for natural disasters.

54. In the light of the above, the Secretary-General is undertaking a review of the Revolving Fund mechanism, with a view to rendering it more appropriate for use by the United Nations humanitarian family. To that end, detailed proposals for changes to the functioning of the Fund will be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session as an addendum to the present report.

# IV. International cooperation and coordination in the response to the humanitarian emergencies, particularly in the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development

55. International aid agencies, including both relief and development actors, increasingly recognize the need for a comprehensive approach to crises, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998. In exploring the development of comprehensive approaches, a number of common themes emerge, irrespective of whether the context is conflict or disaster. They include the need for early joint planning and prioritization, including between United Nations and non-United Nations agencies, the central role of capacity-building, the importance of a clearly agreed division of labour in relief efforts through inter-agency collaboration and the inflexible and discretionary nature of existing financing systems for transitional programming. In addition, humanitarian agencies are beginning to recognize that it is part of their responsibility to ensure that the relief programmes which they implement pave the way for sustainable development and do not create situations of dependency on external aid which will make recovery more difficult.

## A. Transitions in natural disasters

56. The scope of disasters such as the floods in Bangladesh and in China, which affected one fourth and one fifth of their respective total populations, and hurricane Mitch in Central America, revealed multiple underlying causes and once again pointed to the need for comprehensive disaster-reduction strategies. At the same time, the large-scale relief operations staged to cope with these calamities vividly demonstrated the imperativeness of setting up effective response mechanisms to address disaster situations which are beyond the population's coping capacity. Finally, the aftermath of hurricane Mitch highlighted the challenges in financing and implementing timely and comprehensive recovery programmes and thereby avoiding the need for extended relief assistance.

57. The transition phase in the aftermath of a natural disaster can be identified as the period during which external relief support to save and sustain lives begins to be phased out, while local coping capacities, coupled with recovery

programmes of reconstruction and rehabilitation, begins to create the conditions leading to sustainable recovery. Where recovery efforts are delayed, a gap in assistance to affected communities may result. In such situations, agencies are often obliged to continue to provide humanitarian assistance for an extended period to populations not yet able to sustain themselves.

58. In this context, the aftermath of hurricane Mitch provided opportunities for innovative attempts to establish links between the various phases of international assistance. An inter-agency working group convened the United Nations resident coordinators and the disaster management teams of the affected countries to prepare a United Nations inter-agency transitional appeal for relief and immediate rehabilitation to cover needs during the period from December 1998 to May 1999. The transitional appeal attempted to bridge the gap between the delivery of immediate relief assistance and the disbursement of funds for reconstruction. It was regularly updated and posted on the Internet and a mid-term meeting with donors was held to assess response and identify new priorities. An innovative approach, the transitional appeal did not receive the financial support required.

59. To assess the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts, a joint OCHA-UNDP-UNICEF and World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO) Disaster Response and Recovery Mission was undertaken in all countries affected by hurricane Mitch. The Mission assessed United Nations system coordination, made recommendations for improved preparedness and response capacities and presented proposals for ensuring the integration of disaster reduction components into the recovery process and future development planning.

60. The exercise highlighted several reasons why the transitional phase after some natural disasters can be excessively long and characterized by a number of gaps. Relief agencies' planning is often too focused on immediate needs, and does not take into account the needs of the transition phase. Funding for longer-term programmes may sometimes be available, provided that adequate proposals are submitted to donors early enough. Equally, under certain conditions, funds for emergency can be used for developmental activities. However, donor funding mechanisms are far from optimal for responding to the needs of the transition phase. The resources component of the gap seems to be owing in great part to the fact that there are completely separate mechanisms (including budget lines and ministries responsible for their management) for the funding of relief versus rehabilitation activities. The release of funds for rehabilitation is usually too late and subject to serious political, procedural and administrative constraints. In affected countries, capacities for immediate relief often exist within the public administration at the central and local levels and in civil society. As the needs shift from emergency to longer term, the lack of local capacities is felt dramatically and contributes to widening the gap.

61. In countries where large-scale disasters are infrequent, civil society and national authorities generally lack the experience, capacity and resources to move rapidly into implementing comprehensive recovery efforts. In addition, at the national level, responsibility for relief and recovery action is often found in different authorities and institutions. Assessment data and programme priorities, as well as human and financial resource capacities, may differ significantly between relief and development actors and mechanisms to facilitate collaborative efforts may not be well established. Finally, the scope and range of needs for international assistance and national efforts to restore services and productive capacity are significantly greater than those necessary to support immediate life-saving efforts. They also require a much larger and longer-term financial and political commitment.

62. More effective transitions from relief to recovery require an understanding of the above-mentioned issues and will necessarily include addressing the challenges set out below.

63. **Planning**. In the aftermath of a disaster, Governments and assistance agencies should remember that it is important to plan early for reconstruction. The actual reconstruction inevitably takes time, but early planning is essential in a number of respects and could help to partly overcome the delay in funding from donors and lending institutions. The positive experience of the agencies that are present before, during and after the transition phase (i.e. those with a dual, development and relief mandate, such as UNICEF and WFP) should be capitalized upon. It is increasingly recognized that essential developmental activities, such as primary school education and reproductive health measures, need to be continued, if at all feasible, throughout the crisis. The aim should be to rebuild people's livelihoods in the shortest possible time; this should, for instance, include early access to microcredit schemes.

64. **Local involvement and capacity-building**. Within the framework of disaster preparedness programmes, it is important to give attention to the building of local capacities for dealing with the transition and rehabilitation phases. Agencies should assist in the design and implementation of rehabilitation programmes in response to the needs and

priorities as perceived by the local communities at the district and municipality levels.

65. **Financing**. It is essential that the process of developing a comprehensive "package" on the part of the lending institutions (the World Bank, the regional development banks and the largest donors) is revitalized. It is widely accepted that many of the problems experienced during the transition phase are due to the lack of such a comprehensive strategy. Donor countries should make every effort to harmonize the procedures for the release of both emergency and reconstruction funds. Funds for reconstruction should be made available (or at least pledged) substantially sooner and with significantly less onerous procedures than is currently the case. Donor countries should also explore possibilities of establishing funding mechanisms (such as trust funds) specifically tailored to rehabilitation needs.

66. In all of these efforts, the United Nations has a potentially important role to play in fostering the creation of a common platform, including affected countries, lending institutions, donor Governments and relief and development agencies. The experience of the transitional appeal following hurricane Mitch is a step in the right direction, but it will be essential to build on that example. The Council may wish to endorse the use of this approach in other situations and to encourage donor support.

## B. Transitions in complex emergencies

67. The issue of the transition from relief to development in complex crises has been a long-standing policy challenge for humanitarian agencies. In particular, as acknowledged in the Secretary-General's report to the Council of 1998 (A/53/139–E/1998/67), humanitarian organizations attempted for some years to implement the concept of the relief-to-development continuum, without significant breakthroughs.

68. Two years into the process of reform of the United Nations system, there are new structures and tools available which, if applied in a collaborative spirit, can lead to improved performance on transition issues. The central challenge for the United Nations is to make effective use of those structures and tools and to develop strong and flexible linkages between them. To that end, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to build bridges between the United Nations core missions (peace and security, humanitarian, development and human rights). The status of work in this area is outlined below, in five sections that consider (a) contextual issues; (b) strategic coordination for peace-building; (c) frameworks and tools; (d) thematic issues relating to the gap between relief and development; and (e) financial issues.

### 1. Contextual issues

69. Although the question of the transition from relief to development is normally associated with the post-conflict phase of crises, there are at least four types of settings, broadly conceived, in which the United Nations must address the linkages between relief activities and development:

(a) Contexts in which a comprehensive peace agreement has been reached, bringing to an end war between competing factions, although conditions may still be unstable;

(b) Contexts in which war has ended as a result of victory by one party over another;

(c) Long-running wars, in which conflict in certain regions coexists with relative stability in other parts of the country;

(d) Countries that are largely in normal development mode, but are experiencing pockets of instability or conflict.

In each of these types of cases, a different mix of reconstruction and rehabilitation activities will be possible at different times. Humanitarian organizations have learned that, even in the midst of active conflict, except in its most acute phases, it is possible and desirable to commence some limited rehabilitation and reconstruction activities and perform some developmental tasks, including primary education and immunization. Taking on such tasks, even in the midst of conflict, can substantially reduce both long and short-term vulnerability.

70. Policy on relief-development linkages must be based on a realistic assessment of the linkages between assistance policy, stabilization and progress towards sustained peace. The early launch of reconstruction and development activities in a post-conflict environment can complement and underpin political stabilization and the implementation of peace agreements. In situations of long-running, low-intensity conflict, early introduction of rehabilitation and community development activities can help to create conditions conducive to peace settlements — a concept recognized by WFP when introducing a new programme category, entitled "protracted relief and recovery operations". However, political settlements between warring parties will rarely stand or fall on assistance issues alone, nor will an effective relief-development transition by itself bring stability to a political conflict. Political and economic

factors such as the popular support given to a peace agreement, the economic structure of the conflict environment, and the political sympathies of the leaders of neighbouring countries, can often exert a more critical influence over the success or failure of a particular peace process. Thus, for example, prolonged and extensive efforts to move from emergency relief to reconstruction in Angola could not avert the collapse of the peace process that occurred in that country in 1998.

71. Effective transitions from relief to development both contribute to and are ultimately dependent on the transition from war to peace. As a result, the transition process is generally fragile, complex, and fraught with obstacles. Reversals are common, as is a certain degree of disjointedness, as progress made in one sector may not be matched by progress in another. This must be anticipated by undertaking contingency planning for sudden reversals and unexpected opportunities.

### 2. Strategic coordination for peace-building

72. With all types of cases, the essential element of coherent relief-development transitions is the use of a common framework for the elaboration of strategy for peace-building, including common goals and objectives, articulation of priorities and a clear division of labour. Assistance strategy should be closely aligned with strategies for peacemaking, peace-building and the promotion of human rights, to ensure that all activities are mutually reinforcing. In contexts where peace negotiations are under way, the early introduction of humanitarian concerns and reconstruction plans into the peace process — including issues relating to particularly vulnerable groups such as children, internally displaced persons, and women — can help to increase the likelihood of effective transition. Where a multidisciplinary peacekeeping operation has been deployed, the capacity to ensure such coordination has been reinforced by the Secretary-General's directive that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should have clear authority over all United Nations entities in the field.

73. The United Nations already has substantial experience in providing assistance in post-conflict situations characterized by comprehensive peace agreements, as well as in post-conflict situations characterized by one party coming to power. One of the central lessons learned from these cases is that relief-development transitions cannot wait until peace has arrived; planning has to begin while conflict is still ongoing. Early planning reduces the lead time before mainstream development institutions can come on line, and reduces the risk of missing the brief opportunity in which recovery efforts must take hold. Collaborative efforts for peace-building have been undertaken in a number of countries with a mixed record of results. In 1998, some United Nations country teams developed strategic plans for transition, *inter alia*, in Burundi, Afghanistan and Georgia.

74. The United Nations country team in Burundi, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, developed a strategic plan for the United Nations programme. Based on an analysis that the peace process in Burundi was starting to develop positive momentum, the team began to lay the foundations for a transition to reconstruction and development in the medium term. First, two key objectives were identified: reducing dependence on humanitarian assistance; and enhancing the rule of law. With these two objectives in view, the team laid out a programme of engagement in community development activities in those regions and sectors where there was a sufficient degree of stability. Acting collectively, United Nations assistance agencies and their political and human rights partners can contribute to stabilization and increase the likelihood of a sustainable peace. In Burundi the fact that the Resident Coordinator was also the Humanitarian Coordinator, was an advantage and facilitated planning that placed humanitarian programmes in their wider context.

75. In Georgia, the country team, under the overall authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, put in place an innovative programme with two important transitional dimensions. First is the Working Group on Enhancing Capacities for Self-Sufficiency, which is focused on moving people out of emergency aid programmes into those promoting self-sufficiency. Second is a UNDP-led programme on conflict resolution and rehabilitation in South Ossetia, an integrated response strategy which capitalizes on the potential for the assistance programme to serve as a focus for confidence-building, and assists the sides in disengaging from conflictual stances by focusing efforts on solving technical problems through face-to-face interaction.

76. In Afghanistan, the United Nations continued to undertake a notable innovation in the realm of strategic coordination for peace-building — the Afghanistan Strategic Framework. A number of innovative coordination mechanisms have been put in place, including the Afghanistan Programming Body, which brings together United Nations agencies, the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan, the World Bank, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations (both local and international) and the members of the Afghanistan Support Group (the major donors). The Body makes programming recommendations to the country team within

the context of agreed priorities. A concerted — and at times controversial — effort has been made in Afghanistan to ensure that agency programmes are indeed aligned with agreed priorities. These priorities are set out in a strategic plan developed in consultation with those responsible for the peace process. This effort, referred to by the Deputy Secretary-General in the Administrative Committee on Coordination as a disciplined and demanding form of coordination, has resulted in unified and coherent action by United Nations agencies. Although it has been difficult to bring the process to fruition, the Afghanistan Strategic Framework has been widely recognized as a significant step forward for the United Nations and its partners.

77. In developing Generic Guidelines for Strategic Frameworks within the Administrative Committee on Coordination, it was agreed that strategic frameworks should be implemented only in a few cases meeting specific conditions. Nevertheless, the basic ideas behind the Afghanistan Strategic Framework, namely, that the United Nations efforts and those of the wider international community must take place under a common policy framework, that the peacemaking, assistance, and human rights aspects of the United Nations work should be closely aligned, and that assistance programmes can make a contribution to peace-building, have received wide acceptance. In April 1999, the Deputy Secretary-General announced that the strategic framework approach, which would be field-based, would be applied in Sierra Leone, under the leadership of the Department of Political Affairs. The Council may wish to encourage all stakeholders to cooperate with this initiative, in order to make it a success. Equally important for successful strategic coordination is that the United Nations and other significant actors join together in common coordination systems. Whereas, during acute crises the United Nations agencies and their non-governmental organization partners are often the dominant international players, the same is not true in post-conflict cases, when the World Bank, the European Commission, bilateral donors and the International Monetary Fund, all play major roles. Coordination with this diverse set of actors remains a major challenge for the United Nations.

### 3. Frameworks and tools

78. The United Nations has at its disposal a number of tools for the management of relief operations and development programming. In emergencies, the consolidated appeal process (see also paras. 24–26) serves as the common tool for strategic planning. That process not only provides a coordinating framework for emergency operations, but also now routinely incorporates rehabilitation activities. On the development side, the round-table process, though primarily a fund-raising tool, has also been used as a planning process in post-conflict circumstances, for example in Rwanda. An important innovation is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, currently being introduced as part of the United Nations reform effort. The Framework is grounded on a common country assessment, a tool that generates inter-agency assessment, in collaboration with Government, of a wide range of sectors that comprise normal development planning. Two new developments, which will have implications for the management of strategic coordination, are the decision by the Department of Political Affairs to make wider use of peace-building support offices (currently in use in Liberia and proposed for Guinea-Bissau) and the introduction by the World Bank of the Comprehensive Development Framework.

79. The United Nations agencies and programmes have worked hard to determine how each can promote durable solutions for crisis-affected countries. UNICEF's recently adopted rights-based programming provides a framework within which relief, recovery, rehabilitation and development are programmatically linked. WFP has demonstrated its ability to move effectively from relief assistance to recovery through its "Protracted relief and recovery operations". The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), using its Emergency Prevention System, addresses animal health needs at local and transboundary levels; and WHO has created a new Emergency Operations division focused on enhancing the capacities of health authorities to provide care, even during crises. UNHCR, working with its collaborating partners to ensure the long-term security of returning refugees and those who might otherwise be forced to seek asylum, and to provide an initial basis for sustainable reintegration, uses quick-impact projects to inject resources into areas where large numbers of returning refugees may arrive. UNDP's Emergency Response Division and target for resource assignment from the core (TRAC) 1.1.3 financing stream exist to facilitate the inter-agency planning process, through the resident coordinator system, in post-crisis and post-conflict countries.

80. In spite of the availability of these tools, it is widely recognized that (a) they are not yet being used consistently and to maximum effect and (b) there are few consistent linkages between them. The cost of this can be considerable. Among the consequences are inadequate planning, disjointed needs assessment and erratic resource mobilization.

81. Forging effective and early links between the regular planning frameworks is a particularly important task. A major review of policy for recovery by WFP led to the

conclusion that it is critical that recovery and development objectives be initially integrated into the design of relief operations at a very early stage, so that the relief phase does not prejudice longer-term recovery and development or create dependencies. Emergency rehabilitation efforts have all too often created infrastructure or programmes that are not sustainable. The dangers of this happening can be reduced by the early introduction of indicative reconstruction plans.

82. Different planning frameworks will be relevant in different contexts. The consolidated appeal process, in addition to life-saving activities, is best suited to covering those rehabilitation activities that can easily be undertaken even during conflict, especially in the health and social services sector. When the process has been used as the primary planning and fund-raising tool for transitional situations, such as in Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and Tajikistan, it has met with mixed results. Strategic frameworks are designed primarily for use in post-conflict cases where the capacity of the State to engage in strategic planning has been severely weakened. As the United Nations Development Assistance Framework comes on line, links between it and the consolidated appeal process may serve to address reconstruction and early development needs in some transitional cases. Efforts to enhance linkages were endorsed by a joint meeting of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security in late 1998. Subsequently, links have been further developed between the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and United Nations Development Group, including through exchanges between the consolidated appeal process and Development Assistance Framework working groups, and the incorporation in the revised Framework guidelines of risk assessment and links to the consolidated appeal process.

83. Ensuring effective strategic coordination also requires effective linkages between in-country coordinators. Strong ties between the resident coordinator system managed by UNDP and the humanitarian coordinator system managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have helped in the creation of joint structures, for example in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a joint office has been set up. Also essential is a clear understanding of the relationship between humanitarian coordinators and special representatives of the Secretary-General. In April 1999, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs endorsed a draft note of guidance defining this relationship. This guidance reflects the need for special representatives of the Secretary-General to have overall authority over in-country programmes, in order to ensure effective coordination for peace-building. The note also describes the responsibility of humanitarian coordinators, under the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for assessment and coordination of humanitarian response, including the negotiation of access and principles.

84. Different tools will be relevant in different stages and types of conflict. In Bosnia, an early study of baseline data proved to be of great value for agencies planning transitional programmes. Equally, the experience of the War-Torn Societies Project in Eritrea, Guatemala, Mozambique and Somalia provides useful lessons about the need to involve stakeholders in a participatory process of prioritization for rehabilitation and reconstruction. In addition, while the common country assessment is primarily an assessment tool for normal development situations, some elements of it may be valuable in transitional settings, as certain regions or sectors stabilize. In cases where a common country assessment was conducted prior to the outbreak of an emergency, it would contain important baseline data that could guide the recovery process.

85. The real challenge, however, is to ensure that common objectives and priorities in fact guide the development of agency programmes in the field. Only in one case has the hard nut of prioritization been cracked to any significant extent — in the Afghanistan Strategic Framework. In that case, the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator resorted to highlighting within the consolidated appeal process those programmes that conformed to agreed priorities, a decision that generated a strong reaction from some agencies, but which was supported by key donors. The Council may wish to encourage agencies to take steps to ensure that their programmes are systematically tailored, and if necessary curtailed, to fit priorities agreed by the country team in the field. As yet, there is no generally accepted forum for carrying out this process, nor is there any commitment by major donors to base their funding decisions on such prioritization work.

### 4. Thematic issues: bridging the recurrent gaps

86. One of the most important recurrent gaps occurs in the context of the post-conflict reintegration of returnees. What is sometimes characterized as a "handover" problem, that is, the absence of development partners with sufficient capacity to take over from relief agencies, can also be thought of as an absence of sufficiently early joint planning for what are the inherently linked tasks of repatriation, resettlement and reintegration. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the President of the World Bank have focused valuable new attention on the financial

and institutional aspects of this problem in their recent initiative taken in conjunction with the Brookings Institute. The Joint Reintegration Programming Unit in Rwanda and the joint early planning efforts of the Government/World Bank/UNDP/UNHCR in Azerbaijan provide examples of how the activities of relief and development agencies working on reintegration can be integrated. Early planning of this kind, however, has often had to overcome innumerable financial and administrative obstacles, with resulting considerable delays between the return of refugees and the implementation of joint plans.

87. A second important gap often occurs with demobilization, unless it is linked to the reintegration process, demobilized soldiers do not re-enter society and are easily re-recruited into armed groups, leading to higher risks of instability and reversals in the conflict resolution process. On the other hand, a demobilization programme effectively linked to reintegration programmes can contribute to stability. Demobilization and reintegration can also be linked to rehabilitation and reconstruction, for example, by the employment of demobilized soldiers in small-scale community reconstruction projects.

88. The demobilization of child soldiers requires not only early planning, but early action. Even during active conflict, provision must be made for demobilizing child soldiers and for the provision of both relief and assistance for reintegration. Given the rights of children, the laws against recruitment of children into armies and the enormously high long-term costs of the phenomenon of child soldiers, demobilization in this instance cannot wait for the end of war.

89. Relief-development transitions also must encompass comprehensive mine action programmes that are undertaken for humanitarian and socio-economic purposes. The existence of mines of course hampers the process of return and resettlement, and also affects agricultural rehabilitation and sectors such as transport and commerce. As with demobilization, demining programmes must be undertaken in conjunction with wider projects of social and economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. In this context, humanitarian agencies continue to advocate for the universal ratification and implementation of the Ottawa Convention on landmines.

90. All of these programme areas must be addressed in the context of a coherent, system-wide approach to what is arguably the central question of transitions: the role of government. The appropriate relationship between government and humanitarian agencies varies by context. The difficulty is that while humanitarian agencies recognize the responsibility and right of government to set priorities in the recovery process, internal wars are, by definition, contexts in which the capacity of government to choose between competing priorities is severely diminished. Nevertheless, the role of government cannot be sidestepped, nor should it be. Indeed, this is arguably the most critical — and probably the most difficult — challenge of post-conflict reconstruction: to structure the provision of assistance in a manner that helps to rebuild the capacity of government and its civil society partners to regulate effectively the competing claims of different sectors of society. While all elements of post-conflict reconstruction are important, failures in this area produce a high risk of return to conflict.

### 5. Financial issues

91. Integrated programming in protracted crises is hampered by rigidities in the funding systems of a number of donor Governments that restrict the use of funding windows for transitional and developmental activities in war contexts, as well as by differences in the programming cycles of agencies. In recent years, a number of donors, notably the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, introduced flexibility into their financing schemes such that developmental activities can be undertaken even in periods of instability. The Council may wish to encourage more donors to adjust their funding systems to facilitate integrated responses to crises.

92. Even more problematic are the existing funding systems for post-conflict reconstruction. Donors are understandably reluctant to provide funds for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in situations where instability means that there is a high risk of a loss of investment. Indeed, in many such situations, donors are almost equally reluctant to commit funds for humanitarian programmes. The cost of this reluctance is very high. Stabilization after war cannot occur without at least a certain level of investment in public safety and public services. Unwillingness to provide funds at this key moment produces a high risk of a return to conflict and a further period of acute human suffering.

93. Political difficulties associated with transitional financing are amplified by the fact that donors have created a wide variety of mechanisms for post-conflict financing, including trust funds, specialized post-conflict units, and separate finance windows for relief and development. There is no common mechanism of providing funds to which a common mechanism for raising funds, such as the extended consolidated appeal process, can connect. Fiduciary,

administrative and political restrictions placed on some of these funds limit the ability of some donors to fund key activities, such as demobilization. The result is that those sectors most crucial to stabilization in transitional circumstances, such as demobilization, reintegration and governance, are precisely those sectors for which it is often most difficult to generate adequate, predictable funds.

94. In recent years, the extended consolidated appeal process has been used more frequently to cover post-conflict activities. This builds on the positive experience of covering under the process the rehabilitation activities that normally accompany relief operations. However, funding of the consolidated appeal processes in post-conflict countries has continued to decline, culminating in a response of only 5.5 per cent to the 1999 appeals for Guinea-Bissau, 13.5 per cent for Burundi, and 4 per cent for Tajikistan as at 31 May 1999. United Nations country teams in transitional settings such as these are not currently able to tap into the full range of existing funding mechanisms, including dedicated funds for post-conflict recovery held by the World Bank, the Government of Canada, the United States Office for Transitional Initiatives, and others, although the amounts available in these specialized facilities remain modest.

95. There is an urgent need for the United Nations, in consultation with donors, to develop flexible approaches that allow country programmes to tap into a range of funding streams. Inclusive consultations will be required to generate system-wide agreement on the best way to achieve this. In 1999 and beyond, the United Nations and its partners must ensure that strategic coordination for peace-building is adequately backed up by effective funding. Only in this way can there be comprehensive approaches to the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

## V. Observations

96. As the present report was being finalized, the world experienced two unfolding humanitarian tragedies, one, in the Balkans under the glare of television cameras and the other, in Angola, largely ignored outside southern Africa. In the Balkans, over 1,200,000 people were uprooted from their homes in Kosovo within two months. In Angola, over 500,000 people were uprooted with the outbreak of fighting in early 1999, bringing the total number of internally displaced to 1,600,000.

97. While aid agencies poured human and financial resources into the Balkans in response to the needs of the refugees, the airlift of vital food aid in Angola was threatened with disruption for security reasons and for lack of funds. The focus of international media attention on Kosovo helped to ensure essential relief for people fleeing the conflict. However, the response to consolidated appeals for almost all other humanitarian emergencies, while improving on the figures for 1998, remained substantially below expectations.

98. The unfolding tragedies in Angola and Kosovo raised other serious issues for the international humanitarian community. These included questions of access by humanitarian agencies to the victims of conflict, the impartiality and independence of humanitarian aid, the definition of the lead agency and coordination functions in certain types of complex crises, and the role of the military in support of humanitarian operations. The two situations highlighted once again the appalling human cost of lack of progress on the road towards peace. In the end, however, they illustrated the significance of the humanitarian imperative, which requires a humanitarian response to human suffering, whatever its cause.

99. In this fiftieth anniversary year of the Geneva Conventions, violations of international humanitarian law have received particular attention. While the issue of the protection of civilians in conflict will be the subject of a special report to the Security Council in September 1999, the environment for timely humanitarian action in many countries continues to be compromised by deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers, ethnic cleansing, atrocities committed against children and denial of access to humanitarian assistance. The scale and number of these abuses demands accelerated efforts to introduce an effective International Criminal Court, as one instrument for dealing with the cycle of impunity.

100. Important progress has been made within the United Nations system in introducing a more integrated and strategic approach to the planning of assistance programmes in emergency and transitional situations for both natural disasters and complex emergencies. The challenge for the United Nations is to work with non-United Nations partners to establish ways of ensuring that the integrated and strategic approach embraces all stakeholders, both national and international, under the overall leadership, wherever possible, of the national Government. However, such achievements will be of limited value if Member States are not able to make corresponding progress in the provision of appropriate political and financial support to these efforts.

*Notes*

[1] The present report can be read in conjunction with other reports being presented to the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-fourth session, including: report of the Second Committee on the triennial policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system (A/53/610); and reports of the Secretary-General on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon (A/54/135–E/1999/88), collaborative efforts to assist Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama and progress made with the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of the affected countries (A/54/130–E/1999/72) and progress made in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis (A/54/129–E/1999/73).

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/53/3), p. 49.

[3] The report of the Inter-Agency Needs Assessment Mission is contained in the annex to document S/1999/662.

[4] The recommendations cover the issues of coordination, internally displaced persons, local capacities/relief and development, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, human resources management and development.

# Annex

## Follow-up to agreed conclusions (1998/1) of the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council[a]

| *Issue* | *Recommendation* | *Status* |
|---|---|---|
| **Field coordination** | OCHA and the IASC are encouraged to (a) further clarify the parameters of authority for the resident/humanitarian coordinator functions, and (b) establish selection criteria and procedures, and specific training and performance review mechanisms for humanitarian coordinators. | (a) ECHA has endorsed a Note of Guidance clarifying the relationship between HCs and SRSGs.<br>(b) The ERC has encouraged agencies to nominate candidates to participate in competency assessment exercises to enrich the pool of candidates for HC/RC positions. OCHA/UNDP held workshops with RC/HCs in December 1998 in Geneva to exchange lessons learned. This will be repeated. |
| **Roster of humanitarian coordinators** | All United Nations funds and programmes are encouraged to cooperate fully in developing and maintaining a roster of qualified candidates. | Ongoing collaboration between ERC and operational humanitarian organizations who contribute to humanitarian coordination by seconding staff for HC/RC functions as well as other senior staff to OCHA. |
| **Humanitarian segment** | The Secretary-General, in consultation with Governments, is encouraged to recommend ways to further improve the humanitarian segment of ECOSOC. | The Secretariat submitted a Note (E/1999/45) on 23 April, in response to this recommendation. |
| **Mine action** | OCHA is requested to share all relevant information with the United Nations Mine Action Service, the focal point within the United Nations system for all mine-related activities, and other partners on the humanitarian implications of landmines. | As part of its continuing support to UNMAS, OCHA participates in joint assessment missions, as well as in meetings of the Steering Group on Mine Action and the Inter-Agency Standing Group on Mine Action. OCHA has cooperated with UNMAS in facilitating assessment missions to Kosovo and providing advice on the humanitarian impact of landmines in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Sudan. |
| **Financial basis for OCHA** | The Secretary-General is invited to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, for its consideration, his proposals for putting the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on a sound financial basis for the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities. | In the context of the proposed programme budget for 2000–2001, the Secretary-General recommended an increase of 10 per cent of resources from the regular budget for OCHA. |
| **Improving the CAP** | OCHA is encouraged to improve the format and structure of the CAP so as to make them effective programming instruments for the purpose of strategic planning. | IASC Sub-Working Group on the CAP meets regularly in Geneva. Latest "products" include: improved technical guidelines for the CAP including on Common Humanitarian Action Plans, and the organization of a 1999 mid-term review. Joint Launch of 1999 CAPs in December 1998 was a major innovation. "Marketing" of the Consolidated Appeals also being addressed. |

[a] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/53/3), p. 49.

| *Issue* | *Recommendation* | *Status* |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategic monitoring** | IASC should develop a field-based system for strategic monitoring which will help assess how programme targets and strategic objectives are being met. | The improved CAP guidelines recently released focus primarily on strategic planning and monitoring. OCHA and IASC prepared ToR for pilot projects for fall of 1999. |
| **Disaster preparedness** | Disaster preparedness and early warning must be further strengthened at country and regional levels, through better coordination among relevant United Nations bodies and cooperation with interested Governments, regional organizations and other relevant sectors. | OCHA participated in the multi-agency mission to evaluate the international response to hurricane Mitch, in January 1999. The Mission produced a set of recommendations, *inter alia*, on how to strengthen disaster preparedness measures at the national level. |
| **Local capacities** | Particular efforts should be undertaken to enhance local capacity in disaster response, as well as to utilize capacities already existing in developing countries which may be available closer to the site of a disaster and at lower cost. | OCHA, in collaboration with the Resident Coordinator and the Government, has organized an International Workshop on Natural Disaster Management in Beijing, China in June 1999.<br>OCHA, in collaboration with ECOWAS, OAU and Government of Ivory Coast, sponsored the High-Level West African Regional Humanitarian Assistance Seminar in May 1999 for the 16 member States of ECOWAS. The seminar focused on the use of military and civil defence assets in the region for emergencies and disasters.<br>OCHA is working with UNDP and the UNDMT in Kenya on improving the operational preparedness of the Government in case of disaster.<br>In responding to natural disasters, increased emphasis has been placed on identifying regionally based experts to take part in UNDAC teams (e.g. for Mitch and tsunami in Papua New Guinea) and on undertaking, as a matter of principle, local procurement of relief items (e.g., fire-fighting equipment for forest fires in Indonesia). |
| **El Niño Task Force** | The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on El Niño is invited to make available its experiences on national capacity programmes for disaster management as an input to the development of the disaster reduction strategy for the twenty-first century. | The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on El Niño co-organized together with the Government of Ecuador and the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS) the first Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on El Niño, in Guayaquil, Ecuador, from 9–13 November 1998.<br>The work of the Task Force includes, a comprehensive Scientific and Technical Retrospective of the 1997/98 El Niño phase. This component of the Inter-Agency Task Force work has been presented to the Thirteenth World Meteorological Congress, Geneva, Switzerland, 4–26 May 1999. |

| *Issue* | *Recommendation* | *Status* |
|---|---|---|
| | | Specific El Niño concerns with regard to natural disaster reduction were discussed at the International IDNDR Early-Warning Conference, Potsdam, Germany, 7–11 September 1998, at the IDNDR-ESCAP Regional Meeting for Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, 13–17 February 1999, and at the IDNDR-UNEP Regional Meeting for Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 18–21 May 1999. El Niño will figure at the IDNDR Regional Meeting for the Americas, San Jose, Costa Rica, 1–5 June 1999, and at a thematic session of the IDNDR concluding event, the Programme Forum, Geneva, 5–9 July 1999. |
| **Gender issues** | The Emergency Relief Coordinator, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, should ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into humanitarian activities and policies. | The IASC has established a Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance. The group produced a paper on mainstreaming gender into humanitarian emergencies and prepared a policy statement endorsed by the IASC on the same issue. Workshops are being organized to develop tools to integrate the gender perspective into the Consolidated Appeals Process. |

**Abbreviations**

CAP – consolidated appeal process
ERC – Emergency Response Coordinator
IASC – Inter-Agency Standing Committee
OCHA – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RC/HC – resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator
UNDMT – United Nations disaster management team
UNMAS – United Nations Mine Action Service